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12 Days Holiday Tips

Celebrate on a Budget

The holidays can be expensive, but you don't have to break the bank to celebrate. Taking a few minutes now to plan your holiday spending could help you avoid taking on debt. Start by creating a holiday spending plan, keep track of what you spend, avoid impulse purchases, and leave the credit cards at home. [Plan your holiday spending and get low-cost gift ideas.](#)



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Find Seasonal Employment

Even in a tough economy, businesses still need extra help around the holidays. Seasonal employment can help supplement your income and it could lead to a permanent position. If you need to update your resume, these [resume tips and guides](#) can help you create one that will stand out in the job market. [Get online tools and resources to help with your job search.](#)

Save Money with LED Holiday Lights

Electricity bills can grow during the holidays if you decorate with strings of lights. Light-emitting diode, or "LED," holiday lights offer a quality alternative to traditional lights and save both energy and money. The Department of Energy estimates that if every household switched to LED holiday lights, the country would save approximately \$410 million in electricity costs. [Learn more about the benefits of LED holiday lights.](#)



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Pay Attention to Portion Sizes

It can be hard to choose healthy foods when the holidays are filled with temptations like sweets and desserts. One way to maintain your weight over the holidays is to enjoy your meals, but avoid oversized portions. It's also important to balance food choices with physical activity to avoid weight gain. [Find more tips on picking healthier foods and planning a healthy menu.](#)

Shop Online to Save Money and Time

Shopping online can help you stick to a budget because you may be less tempted to buy unnecessary items on display at the store. Look for coupons and promotion codes, free shipping offers, and return policies before you buy. Also, be sure to check holiday ordering deadlines to make sure your gifts will arrive in time. [Save money and avoid problems when shopping online.](#)



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Prevent Holiday Fires

Every holiday season, fires claim the lives of over 400 people and cause over \$990 million in damage. You can keep your family safe by using nonflammable decorations, not overloading electrical sockets, and avoiding the use of lit candles. If you have a live Christmas tree, water it regularly. Dry trees could catch on fire and rapidly fill your room with deadly gases. [Prevent holiday fires in your home.](#)

Buy Safe Toys

As the holidays approach and toy catalogs arrive in the mail, shoppers can become overwhelmed with all the choices. To keep kids safe, make sure to choose age appropriate toys and look for labels with safety advice. For young children, avoid toys with small parts, sharp edges, and electric toys that can heat up. Always purchase safety gear in addition to sports-related gifts or ride-on toys, such as bicycles or skateboards. [Learn more about how to buy safe toys.](#)



Give the Gift of Service

Sometimes the greatest gift you can give to others is service. If you spend three hours a week reading to a child, that child is twice as likely to score in the top 25% in reading. If you work to secure food donations for a local soup kitchen or food bank, you are directly providing meals to hungry individuals. [Find volunteer opportunities in your area or create your own and recruit others.](#)

Get Through the Holiday Blues

The holidays are a joyous time of the year for many people, which can make it more stressful if you are depressed. Exercise, focusing on positive relationships, and doing things that you find rewarding can help with depression. Winter depression could be a sign of seasonal affective disorder, which is caused by the lack of sunlight. [Get advice on how to cope with depression around the holidays.](#)



Reduce Holiday Waste

The holiday season includes many opportunities to reduce waste, recycle, and reuse items. Think about the durability of a product before you buy it as a gift. Cheaper, less durable items often wear out quickly, creating waste and costing you money. If you plan to send greeting cards, consider purchasing ones that are made of recycled paper, or save postage costs and reduce waste by sending electronic greetings. [Consider these additional ideas to reduce waste, save money, and help the environment.](#)

Keep Food Safe

Holiday buffets are convenient ways to entertain a crowd, but leaving food out for long periods of time can invite bacteria that cause foodborne illness. To keep your holiday foods safe, cook them thoroughly, use shallow containers, never leave them sitting out for more than two hours, and keep them at the appropriate temperature. [Keep your guests healthy with these food safety tips.](#)



Fly Through Airport Security

You can get through the airport security line faster by traveling with unwrapped gifts and following the [3-1-1 rule](#) when carrying on liquids, including liquid food items like cranberry sauce and gravy. You can also use the [My TSA](#) app or mobile website if you're at the airport and need last minute information about what you can and can't bring through security. [Learn more about flying with food or gifts.](#)

For more information go to www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Happy_Holidays.shtml